

The Nice □ – Ars Longa Vita Brevis (1968/2003)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
Wednesday, 06 January 2021 15:33 -

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1-1 *Daddy Where Did I Come From* 3:42 1-2 *Little Arabella* 4:14 1-3 *Happy Freuds* 3:25
1-4 *Intermezzo From The Karelia Suite* 8:57 1-5 *Don Edito El Gruva* 0:12 *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* 19:18
1-6.1 *Ars Longa Vita Brevis: Prelude* 1-6.2 *1st Movement: Awakening* 1-6.3 *2nd Movement: Realisation*
1-6.4 *3rd Movement: Acceptance "Brandenburger"* 1-6.5 *4th Movement: Denial* 1-6.6 *Coda: Extension To The Big Note* -
1-7 *Brandenburger* 4:24 1-8 *Happy Freuds* 3:26 *BBC Sessions* 2-1 *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* 7:57 2-2 *Aries* 5:24
2-3 *Lumpy Gravy* 2:14 2-4 *Little Arabella* 4:15 2-5 *Happy Freuds* 3:22 2-6 *Intermezzo From The Karelia Suite*
7:29 2-7 *I'm One Of Those People That My Father Tells My Sister Not To Go Out With* 3:11
2-8 *Azrael Revisited* 5:03 2-9 *Blues For The Prairies* 4:16 2-10 *Diary Of An Empty Day (& Top Gear Signature)*
3:37 *Live In Newcastle* 2-11 *America / Second Amendment* 7:13 2-12 *Rondo* 11:15 - Keith Emerson - organ, piano, harpsichord,
keyboards, vocals - Lee Jackson - bass guitar, timpani, vocals - Brian Davison - drums, bells, timpani + -
Malcolm Langstaff - guitar (6c) - Robert Stewart – orchestral arranger, conductor

The roots of progressive rock, or 'prog' if you prefer, was the seemingly natural outgrowth of psychedelia. Its roots can be traced back to the Beatles' wildly experimental studio adventures during 1966 and 1967. Bands took the ball from the Fabs and ran with it into previously unimaginable territory.

The Nice formed in the wake of all things Sgt. Pepper, signed to Immediate Records, and released their debut album, 'The Thoughts of Emerlist Davjack' in the fall of 1967. That album showed the band exploring the psychedelic side of things, while putting their own stamp on it, adding elements of jazz and classical into the mix.

With their second album, 'Ars Longa Vita Brevis,' hitting the streets in November 1968, much

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had changed within the band and the music scene at large. The band initially was made up of keyboardist Keith Emerson, guitarist Davy O'List, drummer Brian Dawson and bassist Lee Jackson. Less than a year after their debut, List was out (he would later end up in the first Roxy Music lineup) and the band made the decision to remain a trio. The album was preceded by a dynamic single, 'Diamond Hard Blue Apples of the Moon,' and a triumphant take on Leonard Bernstein's 'America.' Things were looking solid for the band at this moment in time.

'Ars Longa Vita Brevis,' which is Latin for "Art is long, life is short," shows the band employing a more dramatic and, perhaps, focused style than their debut. 'Daddy Where Did I Come From?' is a stomping psych pop via beat group rocker, until it suddenly turns into a jazz-inspired freak out complete with narration. A great way to kick off the album, as the sound of Keith Emerson losing his mind is quite enjoyable! 'Little Arabella' is a jaunty little pop song, done up jazz trio-style, with Emerson's Hammond organ reminiscent of Jimmy Smith as the band swings. The acidic and twisted pop of 'Happy Freuds' has elements of Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd smeared all over it.

After that initial cluster of very unique and exciting songs, the LP takes a turn toward the more, ahem, 'serious' side of things. The band dip all the way back to 1893 for inspiration as they dish out their own take on a section from Jean Sibelius' 'Karelia Suite.' The true roots of what would become the sound of Emerson, Lake and Palmer can be found right here. The band continue down this path into no man's land with the title track, which takes up the entire second side of the original LP, and is broken up into six sections...sorry, "movements."

The sound the Nice ultimately arrived at gave birth to the more pretentious aspects of the often wrongly maligned genre of progressive rock. Where the finest elements of the genre were truly exciting and revelatory, the other side of that coin was so often simply bloated rambling, and here's where that started.

Coincidentally, perhaps, the other most significant bell sounding the arrival of the prog era would happen just weeks after the release of 'Ars Longa Vita Brevis,' with the appearance of a new band on the scene called King Crimson, who would point the way forward for many to follow. ---ultimateclassicrock.com

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